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BEST GUIDELINES

THE 10 BEST GUIDELINES FOR YOUR RECOVERY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE INITIATIVE



There are only a handful of Recovery Friendly Workplace programs in the U.S. Conclusive data regarding performance metrics and practices are still being collected. But here are the most essential guidelines to include in your planning and actions.

1. Get buy-in from leadership and employees alike.

Share a topline description of the RFW program – and be clear about what’s in it for everyone involved: Better productivity, better safety, happier employees, greater loyalty and engagement – and creating a healthier work environment.

2. Talk about it openly.

For too long, “addiction” has been covered up by silence and shame. It’s time to change the way we talk about it. Make the narrative about recovery, hope, and forward movement.

3. Reduce gossip and protect personal dignity.

When an employee is suffering from SUD, colleagues tend to talk about it. But you can reset the tone by asking everyone to respect privacy, embrace recovery, and pull together.

4. Pay attention to your language.

Use constructive language that emphasizes the person, not the disease or disorder. Examples: Replace “Addict,” or “druggie” with “person with a substance use disorder” or “person in recovery.” Replace: “Drug abuse” with “drug use” or “substance misuse.” Replace: “Clean” with “in recovery” or “substance-free.”

5. Treat SUD like what it is – a health condition.

SUD is a health issue and it can be treated effectively. An employee with diabetes is essentially no different than one with SUD. And an employee recovering from a disabling accident should be treated no differently than one recovering from SUD.

6. When you’re hiring, keep an open mind.

If the prospective employee reveals a history of SUD or that they are in recovery, remember that he or she has a medical condition that doesn’t necessarily disqualify



them from being a good employee. Reconsider possible candidates who have a “criminal background” that is only related to their SUD.

7. Create wellness programs.

Work/life balance and wellbeing can be incorporated into the workplace. From flex time to healthy eating options, wellness program send the message that work and personal health should be joined.

8. Be alcohol-conscious.

Serving alcohol at work events can be a trigger for someone with SUD. Consider a variety of non-alcoholic options.

9. Participate in recovery-focused community events.

Making your position known publicly tells everyone that being a Recovery Friendly Workplace is a point of pride.

10. Build a working relationship with recovery organizations.

Make sure area recovery groups are positioned as a resource for employees.

